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Extension Work for Foresters

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WHETHER wanderlust may be inherited is an open question and interesting for speculation. Anyway, one itinerant minister's family produced a forester who had four jobs during his first six years out of school. Three of these were on as many California National Forests and one in an Eastern university.

Just how did training in forestry at Ames and during the three summers of the course fit me to hold jobs as forest agent, forest assistant, deputy forest supervisor, and extension forester? What a student was able to get in forestry at Ames in 1905-09 was a lot different from the courses offered now, but the same fine spirit dominated. Iowa State College and the same helpfulness on the part of the entire faculty were available. You couldn't escape them. So my answer is that forestry training gave me my chance and (perhaps by indoctrination as much as anything else) gave me the *conservation viewpoint*, a thing that can't be bought readily by employers, public or private, in the open market. This viewpoint has a lot of components, and among them are appreciation of the needs of growing things, consciousness of the duty of public service, keen interest in the productive possibilities of wild lands, and an almost religious zeal for the conservation of natural resources. There isn't a better place in the country to get this viewpoint than at Iowa State College.

"Chance" to make good and "viewpoint" are mentioned first because we are likely to fool ourselves about the possession of skill and experience at the start. On the other hand grounding in the foundation subjects was invaluable.

In the line of professional subjects dendrology, silviculture, and the limited work in management and policy under Prof. Hugh P. Baker enabled the forester from Ames to talk the language, work intelligently, and keep from going native in the face of what amounted almost to ridicule on the part of local persons.

From the extension work at Syracuse, successive bowings to wanderlust took me to a supervisorship on a water-producing and recreation forest with headquarters in Los Angeles, out of forestry into two years of retail lumber business, one of promotion work and miscellaneous floundering, and eventually back to Washington as Forester of the American Forestry Associa-

tion, which was really down the old extension alley. Four years in the last place were followed by the chance to teach half time and spend the other half on extension work with schools and other agencies, private and public, in Michigan, a state with tremendous potentialities in forestry and other natural resource business.

No phase of the latter position is uninteresting, but working with people is the most interesting. The hardest task in a forester's extension work is to multiply his employer's influence without allowing the means to this end to become cold and impersonal.

Such means include publicity, exhibits, and prepared programs for starting a community forest, for observing Arbor Day realistically, for teaching conservation in public schools, for holding up the hands of public conservation agencies, and for keeping privately owned wild lands productive. Making such things live and really work taxes ingenuity, imagination, and professional knowledge to the utmost. Only a part of this work can be done by personal contact.

The Public Relations field is wide open for the few who have a flair for it, who are professionally well grounded in forestry and general conservation, who can stand up to the accusation of being "hocey" artists regardless of their sincerity, and who like people. And some teaching along with this line makes the entire set-up favorable for keeping fit professionally, making a real contribution to conservation, and making a decent living. If you want them, and what forester doesn't, there are plenty of chances to get into the woods too.

